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# CIA's Oil Man

JAMES A. WECHSLER

For better or for worse, John McCone will be the new director of the Central Intelligence Agency. That has been settled by the Senate, with 14 dissenters.

Perhaps he will confound all our apprehensions. Men have risen unexpectedly to large occasions before.

But a reading of the transcript of the hearings and the Senate debate which preceded his confirmation can only evoke a sense of mingled disbelief and despair.

This comment is only partly stirred by the conflict-of-interest questions soberly and thoughtfully raised by Sens. McCarthy of Minnesota, Clark of Pennsylvania and Margaret Chase Smith of Maine. McCone is the second largest stockholder in Standard Oil of California; in all the tangled affairs of the Middle East in which CIA must inevitably be involved, there is a real question whether what is good for oil is good for the world. It is not my fear that Mr. McCone would cynically put personal profit above national welfare or human survival.

The question is whether the attitudes of a conservative Republican so steeped in the business of oil will be helpful in the seething turmoil of this area of poor people and great expectations.

One must be concerned, too, about the intemperate, self-righteous tenor of his response to a statement issued in October, 1959, by 10 professors at the California Institute of Technology supporting Adam Stevenson's call for U. S. initiative on the banning of hydrogen tests. Mr. McCone was a trustee at Cal-Tech—and a Republican partisan. He promptly blasted the statement, echoing, in curiously simple-minded tones, the language of the test lobby. His rhetoric, as Sen. McCarthy observed, indicated an agitated commitment to a preconceived position in this life-and-death area. Can he be relied upon for objective guidance in the great debate on resumption of atmospheric tests?

Yet neither of these matters seems quite as decisive as this colloquy at the hearings.

Sen. Smith: . . . It is my recollection, Mr. McCone, that all of your predecessors had some prior training or experience in the field of intelligence prior to their appointment as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Will you tell the committee what training or experience you had in the field of intelligence prior to your appointment to that position?

Mr. McCone: None.

Sen. Smith: In view of your lack of training and experience in the field of intelligence, you are unique, are you not, in comparison with all of your predecessors.

Mr. McCone: I do not know that because I do not know the experience of my predecessors.

Sen. Smith: What then makes you feel that you are suitably and adequately qualified to be the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency when you have had no experience or training in the field of intelligence?

Mr. McCone: I think, Senator, that that was a question decided by others than I . . .

Sen. Smith: Was there not some question in your mind about your qualifications?

Mr. McCone: A very serious one.

Sen. Smith: Did you not raise such a question with the President and others with whom you talked?

Mr. McCone: I raised it in my own conscience, naturally, with my wife. Yes.

Sen. Smith: But not with the President?

Mr. McCone: No; I did not raise it with the President.

In summary, then, Mr. Kennedy has appointed to a critical position a citizen who, with almost disarming candor, confesses his total lack of background and experience. . . . that he neglected to discuss such matters when he interviewed for the job. Would Standard Oil of California lax in making a top executive? Is the CIA for so daring an exercise in on-the-job training?

Nevertheless, in the face of the record—or non-record—of Symington, Jackson, Russell and others ardently carried banner. They were impatient with those who were asked to reason why.

Who sponsored McCone's nomination behind the scenes? Sen. McCarthy says there are "three or four stories" of the origins of the move; the idea is variously attributed to Kennedy, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, Allen Dulles and Clinton Anderson. None has claimed pride of authorship.

The most delicate theory I can evolve is that President Kennedy, stung by the debacle of Cuba, decided that what the country needs is a director of intelligence with a clear record of non-knowledge and non-experience in the field.

The wisest joke around Washington is that it is now a matter of time before a secretary of state who could swear that he had been out of the country.

The hopes of the affair will not quickly subside. Sen. McCarthy has returned from Punta del Este resolved to make a major speech on what he views as the delinquencies of our preparation for that conference.

Sen. Fulbright is reported planning new hearings on various proposals for Congressional exploration of CIA's past—and for tighter controls on its future.

Meanwhile, let us pray, and perhaps ask why an Administration so crowded with intelligence should display such apparent irrationality in picking its chief of intelligence.